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Coleridge's *Zapolya*: Between Dramatic Romance and Gothic Melodrama

In the field of Romantic studies, starting with the advent of new historicism in the 1980s there emerged considerable interest in texts traditionally viewed as artistic failures. That was linked to the belief in the need of "breaking down the barriers between 'literary' texts and other genres and questioning the hierarchy of 'major' and 'minor' writers set up by critics inspired by modernist aesthetics" (Franklin 2007: 83). Simultaneously, under the influence of Marxist cultural materialism texts were viewed as records of ideological conflicts of the time. This opened up new areas of research, one of them being popular theatre, which, in turn, shed a new light on the works of "canonical" writers. Even if one reverts to a more traditional, humanist critical position these insights are meaningful when they allow us to understand why a given literary work failed to succeed.

S.T. Coleridge's drama *Zapolya* offers an intriguing test case. Why did a perceptive critic of Shakespeare fail as a playwright? It is generally agreed that his plays belong to his "minor" works. Nonetheless, his tragedy *Remorse* achieved a relative stage success at Drury Lane in 1813. While *Zapolya* was never staged in the patent theatres, its melodramatic adaptation by Thomas Dibdin entitled *Zapolya; or, The War Wolf* was produced at the Royal Circus and Surrey Theatre with a considerable success within three months of its publication in 1817.[1] The stage history of Coleridge's plays is illustrative of what Jane Moody perceives as the major changes in the theatre in the period 1776–1843: the "ideological collapse of legitimate drama" and the development of

[1] Advertised together with a comic ballet called *Housewarming* and a burletta *Tom Jones* in *The Morning Post* for 9 February 1818. Dibdin must have known about the plans to transform *Zapolya* into a melodrama as he worked at Drury Lane in 1816 (see Coleridge 1959: 705). He staged the melodrama at the time of Coleridge's lectures in 1818.

"illegitimate dramatic forms such as extravaganza, burlesque and melodrama" (Moody 2004: 199).

The term "melodrama" came to Britain from France in 1802 with Thomas Holcroft's *A Tale of Mystery*, billed as "a New Melo-Drame," which was closely based on Guilbert de Pixérécourt's *Coelina; ou l'Enfant du Mystère*, and theatre historians often view the form as a French importation.[2] However, it is important to note that the essential features of melodrama appeared in English theatres long before 1802, and many plays of the 1790s were generic hybrids, exhibiting stock characters and situations traditionally associated with this form (Moody 2004: 210). The rise of melodrama can be viewed, at least to a certain extent, as a product of the licensing laws. In London only the theatres of Covent Garden and Drury Lane and in summer Haymarket were given a royal licence to produce spoken "legitimate" drama. This licence, however, could be circumvented by minor theatres under the so-called "burletta" licence, which allowed to use speech in musical drama. In theatrical practice this meant a drama containing five or six songs in one act. The plays performed at the minor theatres became so popular that the patent theatres also started to include them in their repertoire. Allardyce Nicoll defines the genre by providing a catalogue of melodramatic features: "the spectacular nature of the setting, the love of gloom and mystery, the excess of artificial sentimentalism, the hopelessly unnatural poetic justice and the general air of pathetic morality," combined with a set of stock characters (Nicoll 1961: 98). He lists the titles such as "Plays," "Dramas," "Musical Dramas," "Dramatic Romances," "Musical Dramatic Romances," "Historical Romances," "Historical Plays," or "Operas" (Nicoll 1961: 98–9). Nicoll does not take the inclusion of music as an inherent feature, but his definition was created for the purpose of his whole *History of English Drama* to cover the modern usage of the term. Dickens's sympathetic account of melodrama in *Oliver Twist* suggests that in 1838 the use of songs and music was still one of its characteristics.[3] Melodrama easily blended with

[2] J.A. Cuddon in *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* 3rd ed. (1977, London: Penguin, 1991) describes melodrama in terms of its historical development and links its origins to the beginnings of opera in the sixteenth century, which were an attempt to revive classical tragedy. He presents further development of melodrama in France, where it became a separate genre by extending the use of dialogue and focusing on elements of "sensationalism and extravagant emotional appeal." Cuddon's account ignores the development of the genre in England throughout the eighteenth century.

[3] "It is the custom on the stage, in all good murderous melodramas, to present the tragic and the comic scenes, in as regular alternation, as the layers of red and white in the side of streaky bacon. The hero sinks upon his straw bed, weighed down by fetters and misfortunes; in the next scene, his faithful but unconscious squire regales the audience with a comic song. We behold,

the Gothic mode, and already some of the Gothic plays of the 1790s, such as Matthew Lewis's *The Castle Spectre* (1797), can be termed Gothic melodrama (Bratton 2007: 121) since they feature the typical combination of stock characters, sentimentality, comic situations and Gothic paraphernalia.

In *Zapolya* Coleridge moved closest to the popular drama of the time. The play's origins can be traced to March 1815, when Coleridge asked Byron for help in having a collected edition of his poems published, and Byron replied by not only promising help, but also by asking Coleridge to write another play for Drury Lane, which would raise the standard of the London theatre by improving the quality of its repertoire. As he thought highly of *Remorse*, he perceived in Coleridge one of the theatre's prospective reformers. On 31 March 1815 he wrote: "If I may be permitted, I would suggest that never was such an opening for tragedy. In Kean, there is an actor worthy of expressing the thoughts of the characters which you have every power of embodying" (Byron 1975: 286). Byron expected the play to be a tragedy of similar type to *Remorse*, and the lead part to be most likely a villain-hero suitable for Edmund Kean, the great Romantic tragic actor. Coleridge was at the time preparing the new edition of his poems, and working on the preface to it, which was to turn into *Biographia Literaria,* and it was only on 15 October that he wrote to Byron again, sending a newly printed copy of his poems and stating that he was working hard on the drama. He promised to finish it by the third week in December, and Byron had great hopes for it; he told Thomas Moore that if it was completed, "Drury-Lane will be set up" (Byron 1975: 322). But no tragedy materialised; on 16 January 1816 Coleridge said that the play he was writing was not "the Tragedy, [he] promised to Drury Lane" (Coleridge 1959: 617), and he referred to it as his "dramatic romance" in a letter to William Sotheby (1959: 620).

This shift from a tragedy to a dramatic romance is significant. Coleridge found himself incapable of writing a tragedy, in spite of a strong incentive to do so. After his experience with *Remorse*,[4] he must have felt that a "dramatic romance" was much more appropriate for the contemporary theatre. Coleridge

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with throbbing bosoms, the heroine in the grasp of a proud and ruthless baron: her virtue and her life alike in danger, drawing forth her dagger to preserve the one at the cost of the other; and just as our expectations are wrought up to the highest pitch, a whistle is heard, and we are straightway transported to the great hall of the castle: where a grey-headed seneschal sings a funny chorus with a funnier body of vassals, who are free of all sorts of places, from church vaults to palaces, and roam about in company, carolling perpetually" (Dickens 1985: 168–9).

[4] While reworking his tragedy for its performance in Drury Lane in 1813, Coleridge moved close to melodrama. Indeed "melodrama" is the term used to describe *Remorse* in *The Oxford Companion to English Literature,* ed. Margaret Drabble, 6th ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 217. See Coghen 2005: 136.

uses this term interchangeably with the term "romantic drama" to describe Shakespeare's plays: "they are in the ancient sense neither Tragedies nor Comedies, . . . nor both in one – but a different genus, diverse in kind, not merely in Degree, – romantic Dramas or dramatic Romances" (Coleridge 1987: i. 466).[5] In his discussion of *The Tempest* he defines "the romantic drama" as:

> a Drama, the interests of which are independent of all historical facts and associations, and arise from their fitness to that faculty of our nature, the Imagination I mean, which owes no . . . allegiance to Time and Place . . . a species of Drama therefore, in which errors in Chronology and Geography, no mortal sins in any species, are venial, or count for nothing. (Coleridge 1987: ii. 268)

This concern with the defence of his Shakespearean model is reflected in his Advertisement to *Zapolya*, in which he acknowledges the play to be an imitation of *The Winter's Tale*, and, as it is based on the same principle, he subtitles it "A Christmas Tale." Since the Shakespearean drama is for him the model of the highest dramatic perfection, this seems to be the direction he chooses for his new play, but the irony of his undertaking is that he produces a play which can easily be transformed into a melodrama. Indeed, the very use of the term "dramatic romance" suggests such a transformation since in contemporary stage practice the word was used to refer to melodrama; the phrase "a Christmas Tale" also implied a popular entertainment.[6]

The story of Coleridge's attempts at having the play produced is a string of failures and humiliations. Alethea Hayter discusses it in relation to Coleridge's critique of Charles Maturin's Gothic tragedy *Bertram*, and rejects the common critical assumptions that the latter prevented the production of Coleridge's play at Drury Lane. Interestingly enough, Coleridge originally wanted his drama to be produced at Covent Garden:

> the present piece must depend almost for it's fate, certainly for it's success, on the talents of the Actresses – in an equal, perhaps, in a greater degree than on those of the Actors. For there are three female Characters, each perfectly distinct from the other, and all prominent. – Now at D.L. they have not a single tolerable Actress: and excepting Kean scarcely one effective Tragic Actor. – If I send it to C.G., it will be either damned on the first night, or have a more than ordinary Run – from the boldness and originality of the Plan. If I send it to D.L. it will run a still greater

[5] Foakes points out that the distinction comes from Schlegel, but Romance seems to be Coleridge's own term.

[6] As, for instance, in David Garrick's *A Christmas Tale* (1774), subtitled "A Dramatic Entertainment."

> Risk of instant failure from the technical Criticasters, and no chance of popularity. (Coleridge 1959: 617–8)

Covent Garden's main star at the time was Eliza O'Neill, but it was also the theatre where Mrs. Siddons performed during the last years of her career, and indeed briefly re-appeared in 1816. Coleridge might have had Miss O'Neill in mind for the character of Sarolta, and Zapolya would have suited Mrs. Siddons's repertoire.

The play was, however, rejected by Covent Garden, and Coleridge sent it to Byron on 10 April 1816. Byron would not have had much time to attend to the play, as this was the time of his scandalous separation from his wife and departure from England. Douglas Kinnaird, who together with Byron was on the management committee of Drury Lane, offered to produce the play as melodrama; Coleridge was so desperate to get *Zapolya* produced that he was willing to agree, though with considerable misgivings: "Mr Kinnaird fully intends to bring out the Christmas Tale next Christmas; but as a Melo-drama, with songs and choruses, & the Story transmuted into a domestic not political occurrence – the Usurper to be made a Baron" (Coleridge 1959: 644).

Kinnaird's proposal corresponded to the eighteenth-century adaptations of the play after which Coleridge modelled the construction of his drama. Until John Philip Kemble's production of 1802, *The Winter's Tale* was performed in either Macnamura Morgan's adaptation, *The Sheep-Shearing: or Florizel and Perdita*, or Garrick's version, *Florizel and Perdita*, both of which omitted the first act and concentrated on the love story between the prince and the shepherdess who fortunately turned out to be a princess (Bartholomeusz 1982: 29–41), transforming the play into pastoral romance. Gothic melodrama was the form into which Coleridge's "dramatic romance" could easily be transformed, and Coleridge was willing to agree, though entertaining fears for his literary reputation (Coleridge 1959: 644). But when Kinnaird was no longer in charge at Drury Lane, the plans for the production were dropped. After being published as a dramatic poem in 1817, the play was staged as a melodrama at the Surrey Theatre in February 1818 by Thomas Dibdin, who had been prompter and pantomime writer at Drury Lane at the time of Coleridge's negotiations with Kinnaird, before taking over the management of the Surrey. As Jim C.C. Mays points out, "the production might have been a slight embarrassment" for Coleridge, whether he had anything to do with it or not, which it has been impossible to establish (Coleridge 2001: 1331–2).

This transformation of the play could have been anticipated. At the same time as Coleridge was promising a tragedy to Byron, he also wrote to him of

other theatrical pieces he might be able to produce, or rather the fragments of which supposedly already existed in manuscript:

1. Two Acts and the Skeleton of the Remainder of a Tragicomedy, entitled Love and Loyalty. – I wrote it with a view to Stage Effect – & that merit, I think it would have –

2. Laugh till you lose him – a dramatic Romance –. Putting all merit out of the Question, it is in the scheme more analogous to the Tempest than any other. The Songs, & one act written.

3. An entertainment in two acts – the Scene in Arabia – First act finished, & the Songs for the second.

4. The Three Robbers, a Mime or speaking Ballet – for Christmas.

5. A scheme at large for a Pantomime – from a Story in the Tartarian Tales, which delighted me when a Boy.– (Coleridge 1959: 606)

Although it would be difficult to take any of these projects in earnest, they reveal Coleridge's awareness of what might please the contemporary audience. The generic shift from tragedy through tragicomedy and melodrama to pantomime is revealing. Coleridge knew what constituted the most successful entertainment for the theatrical audience, and was toying with the idea of providing it. Obviously, his attempts at writing for the theatre were to serve as a means of earning his livelihood at the time when he was working on his great philosophical project. He regarded them as more dignified than writing for the newspapers and literary magazines (Coleridge 1959: 592–3). He was also thinking of an adaptation of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Merchant's Bush*, which is rather surprising in view of his considering them as "the *Kotzebues* of [Shakespeare's] days" (Coleridge 1987: i. 520), and of an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Richard II* for the stage.

The latter confirms his interest in creating a national drama as *Richard II* provided him with the model of "the most magnificent and the truest eulogium on our native country, which the English language could boast." According to Collier's notes, "[w]hen Coleridge felt that upon the morality of England depended her safety and that her morality was supported by our national feelings, he could not read these lines with triumph – when he reflected that while we were proudly preeminent in morals our enemy only maintained his station by superiority in mechanical means" (Coleridge 1987: ii. 529–30). Coleridge commented on the famous passage from Act 2 Scene 1 "This royal throne of Kings, this sceptered isle . . .": "If this sentence were properly repeated every

man would retire from the theatre secure in his country if secure in his own virtue" (Coleridge 1987: i. 378).

Zapolya was to be such a national play, celebrating the fall of Napoleon and positing the cultivation of domestic affections as the most secure means of establishing social harmony and justice (cf. Carlson 1994: 99). The Prelude, "The Usurper's Fortune," shows the rise to power of the Napoleonic figure of Emerick (Woodring 1961: 217); Part II, "The Usurper's Fate," depicts the rightful heir reclaiming the throne. These headings suggest that Coleridge may originally have thought of the play as a tragedy he had promised to Byron, with a Napoleon-like figure at the centre.

The tragic potential of the play can be noticed in The Prelude. It opens with a conversation between Chef Ragozzi and Raab Kiuprili. The latter is a military commander summoned from a military campaign by the dying King Andreas, who has appointed him, together with the Queen and the King's brother Emerick, regents. The king dies in suspicious circumstances, and Emerick declares himself King, alleging that the Queen's claims of the expected birth of a child and successor to Andreas are false. Kiuprili challenges Emerick's claims, which brings him into conflict with his son Casimir, who is Emerick's staunch supporter. Emerick arrests Kiuprili in spite of Casimir's plea for mercy, and plans the assassination of the Queen. However, Queen Zapolya manages to escape with her newly born son thanks to the help of Ragozzi, who has also managed to help Kiuprili escape.

Part II of the drama drifts away from an open political debate to romance, by turning to the traditional topos of long-lost noble children. We learn that the civil war which followed the flight of the Queen ended in Emerick's victory. The royal infant has been brought up by a simple mountaineer, Old Bathory, who found him near the seemingly dying Zapolya. He has grown up as a valiant young man called Bethlen, unaware of his royal ancestry. Prompted by dreams, Zapolya and Kiupirli have returned from their secure retreat and have been hiding in a cavern near the place where Zapolya entrusted her son to the care of Bathory. Sarolta, the beautiful and reclusive wife of Casimir, is expecting her husband's arrival; she meets Bethlen and Bathory following a dispute concerning her servants assaulting some country girls, immediately recognises the virtues of Bethlen and, on hearing his story from Bathory, takes him under her protection. Bethlen is told how Bathory found him and starts the search for his mother in an area of the woods deemed to be haunted by a werewolf. He is followed by Glycine, the lost daughter of Chef Ragozzi, who is an attendant on Sarolta and betrothed to Laska, the villainous Steward to Casimir, but in love with Bethlen. She is the first to discover Zapolya and Kiuprili hiding in

a cave. Bethlen's recognition scene with his mother follows; he is told to return to Casimir's castle to take Kiupirli's sword, and arrives just in time to rescue Sarolta from the attack of Emerick, who attempts to rape her. The injured Casimir and other confederates disgusted with the abuses of Emerick conspire to overthrow him. Glycine rescues Bethlen/Andreas by killing her own fiancé, and Casimir kills Emerick. Thus the Usurper is punished and Zapolya's son's claims to the throne are acknowledged.

The Prelude has strongly political overtones; the main dramatic conflict, somewhat reminiscent of Schiller's *The Piccolomini*, which Coleridge translated in 1800, seems to be between Kiuprili and his son, Emerick in a Godwinian manner challenges the principles of hereditary monarchy:

> Conscience, good my lord,
> Is but the pulse of reason. Is it conscience,
> That a free nation should be handed down,
> Like the dull clods beneath our feet, by chance
> And the blind law of lineage? . . . (Prelude, 1. 302–6)[7]

The noble but misguided Casimir justifies Emerick's claims to the throne in a truly Napoleonic fashion:

> What better claim can sov'reign wish or need,
> Than the free voice of men who love their country?
> Those chiefly who have fought for 't? Who by right
> Claim for their monarch one who having obey'd
> So hath best learnt to govern: who having suffer'd,
> Can feel for each brave sufferer and reward him?
> Whence sprang the name of Emperor? Was it not
> By nature's fiat? In the storm of triumph,
> 'Mid warriors' shouts, did her oracular voice
> Make itself heard: Let the commanding spirit
> Possess the station of command! (Prelude, 1. 315–25)

Casimir's rhetoric is easily rebuffed by Kiuprili, who dismisses the idea of the military as the basis of the state. The discussion among Emerick, Casimir and Kiuprili on the legal succession of kings and the people's choice constitutes the main political theme of the drama. That Casimir hears Nature's voice "mid warriors' shouts" is the ground of his mistake. The whole thrust of the drama is aimed at proving that the voice of Nature is a privilege given to innocence.

[7] All quotations are from *Zapolya* 2001.

John Beer interprets the play as representing the victory of innocence over evil, which could not be achieved by force (hence the failure of military resistance to the tyrant), and sees Sarolta and Glycine as personifications of this innocence (Beer 1959: 197). It seems that in the course of the play the women win the victory for the men through their innocence, and through intuition which originates in it. They provide the sphere of alternative values centred on domestic virtues and affections. Ambition is represented as the main source of corruption. Sarolta sees it as a driving force of her husband's career (Part II, 3.2.45–6) and opposes to it the virtues of domesticity in the final speech of the play:

> E'en women at the distaff hence may see,
> That bad men may rebel, but ne'er be free;
> May whisper, when the waves of faction foam;
> None love their country, but who love their home;
> For freedom can with those alone abide,
> Who wear the golden chain, with honest pride,
> Of love and duty, at their own fire-side:
> While mad ambition ever doth caress
> Its own sure fate, in its own restlessness! (Part II, 4.3.74–82)

Coleridge thinks that domestic affections constitute the basis of society, and in this respect he is following Burkean ideas: only family can teach man love for his country.[8] The stress on family values results in the stress on the role of women in society as theirs is traditionally the domestic sphere. This explains Coleridge's deep concern over the prospective performers of the female parts in his drama.

This overriding theme steers the play away from the complexities of the tragic character towards melodrama, where good unavoidably triumphs over evil. The shift is already visible at the end of the Prelude, where we witness Queen Zapolya's escape with her infant child through a secret passage pointed to her by the dead hand of her husband. Interestingly, the Prelude is the part that Kinnaird wanted to omit in his adaptation of the play into melodrama, thus depriving it of its political topicality.

The synopsis reveals that Coleridge is no longer interested in tragedy but is trying to imitate Shakespeare's late romances, not only in the structure of the plot but also in his themes, particularly that of regeneration through innocence. The influence of Shakespeare, particularly of eighteenth-century theatrical

[8] "We begin our public affections in our families. No cold relation is a zealous citizen" (Burke 1986: 315).

adaptations of his dramas, on the rise of the Gothic at the time has recently been widely recognized (Mydla 2009: 30). Coleridge is looking for inspiration in Shakespearean romantic drama, as he understands it, but at the same time he is trying to succeed in the contemporary theatre, and as a result he creates a play easily adaptable into a Gothic melodrama. The main "Gothic" element of the play, a werewolf haunting the forest, central to the imagery of the play, has a rational explanation following the method which Mrs. Radcliffe deployed in her Gothic novels. Significantly, Thomas Dibdin's melodramatic adaptation of the play was subtitled *The War Wolf*, clearly in an attempt to attract the audience. A werewolf, a person transformed into a wolf, or capable at certain times of transforming himself into a wolf, seems to offer a potential for complex symbolic meaning, which Coleridge tries to explore in the play. Zapolya and Raab Kiuprili, while hiding in a cave, are reduced by hunger to stealing sheep and attacking travellers in a wolf-like manner; hence there appear stories about a werewolf haunting the forest. Bethlen/Andreas himself describes the oak where he was found as the place which "the wolf litters" (Part II, 2.1.210), thus metaphorically linking himself to the werewolf. But the actual "wolves" of the drama are Emerick and his supporters, referred to as "rank and ravenous wolves" by Kiuprili (Prelude, 1.104). Therefore Glycine's fears in her dream that Bethlen has been gored by the werewolf (Part II, 1.1.224–6) are justified. In Act 4 during the hunt Peasants sing of hunting the wolf (Part II, 4.2.63), and the wolf which gets finally hunted by Casimir is Emerick.

The ploys to win the spectator involve the use of songs, the introduction of a comic villain, and the climactic scene of Bethlen's conversation with Kiuprili hidden in the cave. The former two both owe a debt to Shakespeare, and mark a move towards Gothic melodrama. Coleridge commented on the use of the songs in Shakespeare's plays that they are "introduced as *Songs*, . . . and just as Songs are in real Life – beautifully as they are often made characteristic of the person who has called for them – Desdemona & the Count in As you like it – [they are introduced] not only with the Dramatic, but as a part of the Dramatic" (Coleridge 1987: ii.118). In Lewis's *Castle Spectre* there is abundant use of songs and music, and Coleridge must have remembered the successful use of music and song in the production of *Remorse*.[9] In *Zapolya* Glycine sings a song to collect her spirits while approaching the werewolf's forest, whereas the peasants' song announces the hunt for the werewolf. Kinnaird, thinking of the transformation of the play into melodrama, must have seen room for more songs in it.

[9] See *Reminiscences of Michael Kelly* in J. Jackson 1970: 138.

Comic characters, clearly descending from Shakespeare, often appear in Gothic melodrama, of which *The Castle Spectre* with its lower class comic characters is a good example. Coleridge also tries to use humour in his play, and again he is trying to follow the Shakespearean model, as he understands it. His comic character, Laska, is a cowardly villain, and the humour seems to be used to stress his villainy and cowardice. He is afraid to follow Glycine and Bethlen to the forest; after the two of them disappear he tells everybody that he has witnessed them being devoured by the werewolf. He believes in the story himself, and thus on seeing Bethlen in Casimir and Sarolta's castle he thinks he sees a ghost.

Despite his apparent attempts to suit the taste of the contemporary audience, Coleridge avoids spectacle and does not exploit the potential for suspense and mystery his story offers. Act 2 constitutes the climactic recognition scene of the play, at least as far as the plot concerning Zapolya and Bethlen/Andreas is concerned, and deploys Gothic semiotic. Zapolya and Kiuprili are discovered in "a savage wood" next to "a cavern, overhung with ivy," wearing "rude and savage garments." From their conversation we learn that they have come there from their secure retreat, prompted by Zapolya's dreams. Both of them are reduced by hunger and danger of discovery:

> Wolf-like to prowl in the shepherd's fold by night!
> At once for food and safety to affrighten
> The traveller from his road – (Part II, 2. 1. 62–4)

Hence Laska's stories of a werewolf find their rational explanation in the manner of Ann Radcliffe's "mock supernatural." Glycine faces the "war-wolf" first. Like a Radcliffian heroine, she is frightened, but she explores the forest in search of her beloved and is rewarded by meeting the motherly Zapolya. Bethlen is determined to face "the monster," which might reveal to him his past, and the conversation between Kiuprili as a mysterious voice from the cave and Bethlen follows. On Bethlen's question if he has a mother, Zapolya rushes from the cave to embrace him.

Coleridgean "Gothic" is not very effective in this scene: as the reader or the viewer knows who is hiding in the cave, the scene does not offer much stage effect. Coleridge himself did not appreciate the importance of mystery and suspense in drama. Characteristically, he claimed that in *The Winter's Tale* there should be some hint of Hermione's later reappearance (Coleridge 1998: 706–7).

Coleridge also shuns having violence represented on the stage. In *Zapolya* he has the tyrant Emerick actually killed in a duel with Casimir; if he thought

in terms of Shakespearean drama, stage combat would be justifiable. The more "spectacular" event, however, is only reported: Glycine kills Laska when he is slyly trying to attack Bethlen/Andreas from behind. Thus she joins the ranks of the stage female characters such as Angela from *The Castle Spectre*, who kills the villain of the play in defence of her father, but the stage effect is not there.

While accepting the validity of Hayter's argument that the rejection of *Zapolya* should not be attributed to the success of Maturin's *Bertram,* it may still be revealing to analyse the grounds for Maturin's success and Coleridge's failure. Maturin's *Bertram* attempts to elevate the Gothic into tragedy, which must have been the source of its great appeal to its first readers: Walter Scott and Byron. Coleridge's drama also uses the Gothic, but its "terror" never reaches the sublime, and is much too soon rationally explained in the tradition of Mrs Radcliffe, or rather the conventions of sentimental Gothic melodrama.

The most obvious reason for *Bertram*'s theatrical success was Kean's performance. Coleridge's failure to create a star-vehicle was also the reason why *Zapolya* could never make a great success at Drury Lane. He failed to create a part for the main star of the theatre, the performer for whom, as Byron had hinted, he should have been writing. He himself was aware of it; hence his doubts about sending the play to Drury Lane. This lack of male tragic lead might also be the reason for Kinnaird's idea of transforming it into a melodrama.

Jeffrey Cox suggests a distinction between the Gothic drama and the domestic melodrama, claiming that the latter, though very often exhibiting many Gothic features, "move[s] away from the Gothic's thematics of the extreme, reducing the complex amorality of the villain-hero to a moral stereotype, rejecting the Gothic's exploration of the supernatural for more everyday concerns, and turning from the display of collective or individual revolt to the celebration of domestic, familial, and patriotic virtue" (Cox 1992: 58). All these features are observable in *Zapolya*. Thus Coleridge's play can be seen as belonging to the category of domestic melodrama, increasingly popular at the time. It is therefore not surprising that Kinnaird suggested turning it into "a domestic not political occurrence" (Coleridge 1959: 644). Coleridge's political and moral concerns combined with his attempt to write a dramatic work suitable for the contemporary stage led to failure as he ended up by producing a drama which could neither succeed on the stage, nor please in the closet.

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